## **Construction Checklist – New School Construction**

# You've been approved for a charter and know you need a building – now what?

- Identify your needs, wants and would-be-nice-to-have's for your location and facility. Much of this should come from your charter's facility plan, but now is the time to dig a little deeper:
  - Identify location
    - Ensure it is close to where students live.
    - Ease of access to utilities
    - Is the road infrastructure sufficient to get kids to the school and withstand a traffic study?
    - Excavation cost could overcome any savings if you have a steep site or bad ground. Have an excavator give you a bid before you buy land.
    - Political factors are you going in an area that wants you?
- Prepare and post an Architect SOIQ (Statement of Interest and Qualifications).. Must be publically posted for a sufficient period to get multiple responses – at least 3 qualified responses are ideal. SOIQ response should include:
  - Examples of prior school construction.
  - Detailed proposals/designs for your school
  - Resume or dossier of whoever would act as lead architect and site architect
  - Require references from prior school construction check the references!
  - You don't have to select the cheapest architect response just the best fit for your school's needs.
- Prepare and post a RFP (Request for Proposal) for your Builder/Financier. Must be publically posted for a sufficient period to get multiple responses – at least 3 qualified responses are ideal. Make sure that RFP requires the following from any builders wishing to respond:
  - Key dates for completion of project request schedule with the following at a minimum:
    - must obtain financing by ? date
    - must secure land by ? date
    - must begin construction by ? date
    - must obtain certificate of occupancy by ? date.
  - Any selected builder must be willing to cancel contract for failure to hit agreed upon completion dates. (You don't want to be tied to someone who can't do the job)

- Financing requirements who will they get financing from, when and on what terms
- o Terms of lease and purchase option
- Require references from prior school construction check the references!
- Select Architect and Builder/Financier in an open and noticed public board meeting after a thorough vetting of references of all candidates. You don't have to select the cheapest Architect or Builder/Financier bidder – just the best fit for your school's needs. Criteria such as on-time completion of building, quality of previous construction and proven ability to get financing are items you may use in making your final selection so long as they were disclosed as criteria in the RFP's.
- Select a School Inspector(s) for both general and special inspections.
   Ensure this person is licensed as a school inspector. This does not need to be a RFP item. (Call Erin if you need some recommendations on inspectors)
- Select a Building Officer prior to the start of permit process or construction process. This person should be a board appointed or employed "construction expert" who can monitor construction progress and complete required reports, weekly, submit formal SP reports prior to the start of construction and monthly reports to the State throughout construction.
  - Building Officer must be an employee of, or member of the Board –
    independent of all possible conflicts with Builders, Financiers,
    Architects, Inspectors or others. The Building Officer must be and
    remain unencumbered in advocating for the school throughout the
    building process.
  - Building Officer should personally complete and sign-off on the SP-4, SP-5, SP-8's, SP-9, SP-10 and SP-11 sent to the State. If a school has opted to go through a local permitting process – the Building Officer needs to verify those submittals as well.
  - Building Officer should be recipient of the regular inspection reports and should monitor construction progress with all parties. This should include at least bi-weekly site visits and conferences with architects, builders, inspectors and top subs.

Pre-construction – You have a Builder, Architect, Building Officer and have identified possible sites to purchase – how to start?

- Analyze current utilities access to the site (power, sewer, water and phone
  as well as fiber-optic cable for mandatory state online testing). Begin work
  with utility providers to ensure timely access for the school.
- Traffic study/analysis with necessary follow-up coordination with impacted government entities to ensure sufficient road access/construction timelines.
- Begin conversation with local municipality to ensure there will not be any major impediments in approval process there.
- Negotiate and complete the lease option or build contracts with Builder/Developer. These contracts need to include:
  - The total cost of your facility (with construction & finance costs) does not exceed 25% of your operating budget – ideally keep it under 21%. Anything higher will jeopardize your ability to get longterm financing and/or run your school.
  - The contract includes liquidated damages to be paid by the builder if construction is not completed on time.
  - The contract should include a construction schedule as an addendum. The school should have the ability to cancel or modify the contract if there is a substantial deviation from the schedule.
  - Land location, size, specification should be noted specifically in the contract or as an addendum.
  - Architectural plans should be included as an addendum If the builder builds you a building smaller, or of lesser quality, than you originally agreed you need to have recourse.
  - Specifications (e.g. what materials to be used) should be a contact addendum
  - Contract should NEVER require a personal guarantee from a Board Member

#### Once land has been purchased:

- Ensure completed purchase contract of property (contract between builder and land-owner). Understand any financing or purchase terms between them that may impact the school.
  - Ensure local municipality or city has reviewed and approved the project within their limits of authorization (mostly related to safety)
  - What portion of site development is to be done by land owner, vs. builder/developer? What are their delivery dates?
- Work closely with architect and builder to complete construction design
  plans and develop a final design. This should have the greatest amount of
  specificity possible. Plans are not complete until the architect, school and
  builder all agree on a final set of plans, specs and schedule for
  construction.

- The following plan reviews need to be completed and passed prior to construction start (needed for building permits):
  - Complete plan review by certified plans examiner
  - Ensure kitchen layout is complete and submitted for approval of Health Department (Health Dept inspects for kitchen facility plus bathrooms and cleaning)
  - Structural Peer Review of plans
  - Energy Code Review
  - State Fire Marshal must receive and review plans prior to construction start.
- Submit SP-4 and SP-5 to USOE and get building permit number. (May also go through local municipality – but be careful there, experiences vary)
- Complete USOE and State Charter Board construction checklist form prior to construction start.
- Complete final architectural designs with spec book finalization.
- Ensure Builder has completed construction financing ensure this is documented and school is provided verification of financing terms and completion.
  - Begin excavation of site no later than January prior to start of school year.
  - Ensure footings are poured no later than February prior to start of school year.

## What to do in the spring before opening:

- Design and Bid (public RFP) Security System. (call Erin or Mike Marshall with Risk Mgmt if you want recommendations on safe entry recommendations)
- Design and Bid (public RFP) PA system
- Select Security System/PA Contractor and have them complete design/build plans for incorporation into architectural
- Design and Bid Landscaping (public RFP) if not already included in building contract.
- Begin researching playground equipment and other exterior elements (bike-racks, benches, playground floor material, etc.)
- Create and submit contingency plan to State in case of delayed facility completion.
- Ensure necessary classroom, kitchen, playground equipment & playground equipment have been ordered
- Design a safe parking lot that will also enable a car pool pick-up and dropoff plan. (Either Erin or Mike Marshall with Risk Mgmt will offer recommendations on safe pick-up and drop-off designs) Ensure your hardscaping is consistent with:
  - A one-way entrance and exit flow-through system
  - Ideally 2 safe lanes for pick-up/drop-off
  - Safe entry and exit from the school grounds

- Sufficient handicapped parking
- Ensure sufficient parking for teachers/parents:
  - Minimum of 8 parking spots per student Elementary
  - Min. of 4 parking spots per student average High School
- Begin SNAP plan (safe walking route plan) in conjunction with local law enforcement and municipalities.

### What to do in the summer before opening?

- Ensure relevant government entities have school zone and cross-walk signage and planning completed, or on track to be completed, by date of occupancy.
- Landscape should be completed this month (at least 8 weeks prior to occupancy).
- Finalize installation of security system, phone system, internet and intercom/PA.
- Obtain identified space within the building to begin housing necessary classroom materials and begin delivery (desks, chairs, etc.). The idea here is to finish a section of the building 3-4 weeks early (ideally a gym or cafeteria) where you can begin moving desks, chairs, filing cabinets, etc. as they arrive rather than housing them at an off-site location and moving them later.

## Here is how you spend August – the last items before completion:

- Obtain Occupancy Permit for the building ideally no later than 8/1.
   Begin the following on-site as much as possible. (It helps retain your enrolled students to be able to see that the building will be ready):
  - Student Testing & Assessment
  - Special Education Assessment
  - Teacher room prep
  - Assembly and distribution of desks, chairs, filing cabinets, shelves, etc.

#### Begin classes!

The general rule of thumb is that you need to start classes no later than your local district schools. If you are going to need to delay the start of classes past that point you should at least have a parent open house in your school where students and parents can tour the building and meet with their teachers and administration. This provides parents with the assurance that the school is prepared and ready for opening.

This list was prepared by Erin Preston from her experience in school construction. It is designed to serve as a guideline in your construction process knowing that each school's needs and challenges will be different.

Erin Preston is an experienced Attorney and one of the Founders and a previous Board Chair of Providence Hall. She has served as the Building Officer on 6 new school construction projects, and 3 additions/ modifications of other charter school projects in Utah from 2008-2011. Erin currently serves as the Superintendent of Providence Hall Charter in Herriman, UT. Feel free to contact Erin at <a href="mailto:erin@providencehall.com">erin@providencehall.com</a> or call at 801-631-9520 should you have any questions or would like to be put in touch with other schools or individuals who might be able to provide you direction in the more detailed elements of your building process.